

## The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Sharm al-Sheikh March 13, 1996

### *Summit of the Peacemakers*

*President Mubarak.* Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Once again, the nations of the world have rallied together in order to enhance peace and promote security in the Middle East. Many leaders who are not present with us today contacted us to express their solidarity and support for the objectives of the conference.

This site where the Peacemakers Summit was held was the theater of many battles in the unhappy past. Today it has become the living symbol of the new era of peace and coexistence. Our gathering represented all worldly cultures and reflected the real concern for peace and stability in this troubled area. It is our consensus the Sharm al-Sheikh conference was a big success.

All leaders and delegates demonstrated a profound commitment to the promotion of peace and security throughout the region. All of them spoke their minds and discussed the issues in a spirit of openness, candor, and objectivity. Our discussions remained focused on the issues of peace and security. Many valuable contributions were made in the course of the two sessions we held.

There were no sharp disagreements or disputes. The interventions went beyond the customary generalities and dealt with specific points which were quite relevant to the purpose of the summit conference. The outcome of the discussions were properly reflected in the statement which has been distributed to you a while ago.

You have certainly noticed that the conference adopted a set of policies and measures in order to enhance the chance for peace and reinforce the security of all parties directly involved in the peace process. Concrete measures and mechanisms were agreed upon for the purpose of combating terror and the terrorists. All the peoples of the region view terrorism as one of the most dangerous threats to their security and stability, individually and collectively.

It is our hope that the believers in peace and reconciliation who constitute the great majority will triumph over the forces of doom and gloom. Hope will ultimately prevail over despair

and fear. It is our hope also the peace process would be activated and revived without delay. As greater security and tranquility are achieved in the area, restrictive measures would be eased and lifted as soon as possible. The living conditions of the innocent people who are suffering in the aftermath of the violence should be improved markedly.

Finally, I would like to say a few words to all those wise leaders who attended the conference. I want to state in this gathering that we are indebted to each and every one of them for their significant contribution and positive spirit. The leaders of the parties who are immediately concerned exhibited their courage and vision. They spoke candidly and positively.

Our Arab brothers exemplified the true spirit of Islam and the Arab culture. Our European friends demonstrated once again that they are fully aware that our two regions are inseparable. Our destiny is one and the same. The cosponsors of the peace process showed the depth of their commitment to peace and security in the Middle East. Each participant in the conference was equally helpful.

President Clinton, who cochaired the meetings, who shares the podium with me, has made invaluable contributions. He worked with me day and night during the past few days. The 7 hours time difference was no barrier or hindrance. He's a statesman of vision and courage.

Before I open the floor to your questions to both of us, I would like to thank you, representatives of the media, for your cooperation and patience. I realize that you are hard-pressed by time and space, but you'll prevail as we will. Thank you.

*President Clinton.* Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me begin by thanking President Mubarak for his willingness to host this historic meeting and by the work that he did to help get this amazing group of people together.

This is an historic showing of the strength of peace in the Middle East today. And as the cochairman's statement makes clear, this unprecedented meeting of leaders from this region and from all around the world has been very serious, has been very successful, is very productive. The

statement has been passed out, I believe, to all of you, but I would like to summarize it for the benefit of those who may not have read it yet. And I see some of the members of the press nodding their heads they don't have it yet, so let me just—it's very brief, so let me go over it.

The Summit of Peacemakers has just concluded. This meeting took place at a time when the peace process confronts serious threats. The summit had three fundamental objectives: to enhance the peace process, to promote security, and to combat terror.

Accordingly, the participants here today expressed their full support for the Middle East peace process and their determination that this process continue in order to accomplish a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the region; affirmed their determination to promote security and stability and to prevent the enemies of peace from achieving their ultimate objective of destroying the real opportunity for peace in the Middle East; and reemphasized their strong condemnation of all acts of terror in all its abhorrent forms, whatever its motivation and whoever its perpetrator, including recent attacks in Israel, considering them alien to the moral and spiritual values shared by all peoples of the region; and reaffirmed their intention to stand staunchly against all such acts and to urge all governments to join them in this condemnation and opposition.

To that end we decided to support the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, the continuation of the negotiating process, and to politically and economically reinforce it; to enhance the security situation for both with special attention to the current and pressing economic needs of the Palestinians; to support the continuation of the negotiating process in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement; to work together to promote security and stability in the region by developing effective and practical means of co-operation and further assistance; to promote coordination of efforts to stop acts of terror on bilateral, regional, and international levels, ensuring instigators of such acts are brought to justice; supporting efforts by all parties to prevent their territories from being used for terrorist purposes and preventing terrorist organizations from engaging in recruitment, supplying arms, or fundraising; to exert maximum efforts to identify and determine the sources of financing for these groups and to cooperate in cutting

them off; and by providing training, equipment, and other forms of support to those taking steps against groups using violence and terror to undermine peace, security, or stability.

Finally, to form a working group open to all summit participants to prepare recommendations on how best to implement the decisions contained in this statement through ongoing work and to report to the participants within 30 days. I can say that President Mubarak and I asked the participants to support an effort by the United States to coordinate an early working group meeting of these—of all the participants here, and we expect to do that within a couple of weeks.

Let me just make one last point. This is a remarkable day because of the number of people from the region who came here, as well as those who came from all around the world. When I leave President Mubarak and Egypt, I will go to Israel with a clear message that Israel is not alone. Now, throughout the region as well as the world, there are peacemakers who stand together against terror, for security, and for the cause of peace. The meeting today and the statements which were made in public by the leaders who were here today would have been unthinkable just a short while ago.

Let me say again to President Mubarak, you, sir, deserve a large share of credit for the fact that this meeting could take place, and it could have taken place in no other place than Egypt. We are grateful to you. And let me say on behalf of the United States, to the people of this region who stand for peace, you can all draw courage and strength and inspiration from what we have achieved here today and what we are committed to do in the future.

Thank you very much.

#### *Palestinian Territories*

*Q.* President Mubarak and President Clinton, I have a question for Egyptian television. President Mubarak and President Clinton, what is your opinion on the closure of Palestinian territories and collective punishment pursued by Israel? Has this conference come up with any decisions to safeguard innocent Palestinians as well, because certain measures were taken against Palestinians right before the conference took place? Thank you.

*President Mubarak.* Anyway, I think that the closure is starting to be released. We have discussed this—I discussed this with Prime Min-

ister Peres, and it was not going to last long. They opened the gates for supplies for the people, and I think this situation will not stay for a long time.

*President Clinton.* Yes, we discussed it, and I know that there are many more trucks going in today with basic supplies than yesterday. And I expect to see some changes. But if I might say, viewed through one eye, this is collective punishment. Viewed through another, it is an elemental security measure at a time when it's hard to tell who may be wrapped in plastique. So it's very important that this be seen as a process of strengthening our common efforts against terrorism and for security, and opening the borders.

Obviously the peace cannot succeed unless the people in Gaza have a chance to flourish economically, to reap the benefits of peace. And it is clear that peace and security are two sides of the same coin, not only for the Israelis but for the Palestinians. And having voted for peace, as the Palestinians have, they now are bound up together in a mutual destiny. And it is in all of our interests to see that both of them succeed in becoming more secure and more peaceful.

#### *Terrorist Nations*

*Q.* President Clinton, Prime Minister Peres and John Major both talked of Iran as a source of terrorism. He also mentioned Libya. Why did this conference not single out any of the nations that you accuse of sponsoring terrorism, point fingers, and impose or try to impose any kind of sanctions on these nations?

*President Clinton.* Well, I think you know my statements on that issue have been quite clear and forthright, and the United States has taken very strong actions there. Let me answer you in this way: The nations here in what they agreed to do—and if you go back to my statement, this is a remarkable statement that every person here agreed that we would together take specific steps, including dealing with funding sources. I believe that's a pretty explicit commitment on our part to do what we can within our means to reduce terrorism in the area. And I believe that we shouldn't diminish what we did do by focusing on what was not done or said. What was done and said is far more than has ever been done and said by people working together in this region.

*President Mubarak.* We don't want to accuse so many—mention any country now in the time being, but we condemn all kinds of terrorism wheresoever. And to condemn some countries who have—[inaudible]—should have definite reasons for that.

#### *Syria*

*Q.* President Mubarak and President Clinton, aren't you gentlemen worried or even bothered that something in the success of this conference is lacking as a result of the absence of a major player in the peace process in the Middle East, and I mean Syria?

*President Mubarak.* Look, Syria is committed to peace. This conference is dealing with the peace process in general, and to see that or to condemn the terrorism and seek for security. Syria, although she didn't attend the conference—and it had its own reasons—but she said she is committed to peace, and I think she is ready to start negotiations for peace.

*President Clinton.* Obviously, from our point of view, we wish the Syrians had come. President Mubarak invited them; we had urged them to come. But I wouldn't overread their absence here; it's part of a general pattern of going their own way.

I was encouraged by the statement which was issued today, and I do believe that the Syrians still want to achieve a peace with Israel at the earliest practical time. Again I say to you, you can focus on what didn't happen today, but if you do, it will blind you to what has happened, which no one would have conceived of happening even a few months ago.

And if you watch, we're going to follow up on this, and this agreement is very specific about what we're going to do. I should also talk about—we're talking about what didn't happen—no one can promise in Israel, in Gaza, in the United States, that—in Egypt—that there will never again ever be an act of terrorism. What we can promise is that we are working hard, we are increasing our capabilities to combat it, and we are going to reduce it and raise the price of doing it. And that is what we committed to do.

#### *Likud Party Leader Binyamin Netanyahu*

*Q.* President Clinton, can you tell me why you decided on this upcoming trip to Jerusalem to visit Mr. Netanyahu and what you plan to tell him?

*President Clinton.* Oh, I visited with him when I was there last time, and I always—typically, when I'm in any country, I visit with leaders of both parties. And I expect what I will do is to reaffirm my determination to fight for both peace and security for Israel, and I will listen to him, which is what I did the last time I was there.

*Middle East Peace Process*

*Q.* President Mubarak, President Clinton, do you have the feeling or the conviction now, in the light of the last days' and even hours' discussions, that—and decisions, probably—that the peace process will continue soon and that there will not be a long gap? And do you share the view of some political observers who believe that a long pause now will be extremely detrimental to the whole peace process?

*President Mubarak.* I would like to tell you that the peace process, although she is meeting some problems, and we expect every now and then until we reach the final goal, we expect that we are going to meet some problems, but that doesn't mean that the peace process will stop. The peace process—we met here today just at least to stop the deterioration of the implementation of the peace agreements.

I think it's a very important point for the peace process to continue. The Syrians have already declared that they are committed to peace. So we shouldn't worry because peace is so precious and it is going on and there is no other way else for the region except to go through the peace.

*President Clinton.* Let's be candid here. The purpose of the terror was to kill the peace. I mean, the purpose of the terror was to make the Israelis feel so insecure that peace seemed worse—that pursuing the peace process seemed worse than some reversion to the status quo. And the purpose of the terror was to make sure that the Palestinians wound up suffering economically so much they no longer wanted to pursue the peace.

Our purpose here is to try to bolster the level of confidence among Israelis and Palestinians to say that we need peace and security and basic prosperity, and we need to pursue all three at once. The pace of these processes is not within anyone's total control, as President Mubarak said. But what we know is if we keep pushing forward, if we don't permit it to slip backward, that in the end we believe we will

succeed because all the parties not only want peace but it is in their interest to achieve it. And so the short answer to your question is, I believe we will prevail on whatever timetable, unless the enemies of peace can raise the pain of pursuing peace to the Israelis or to the Palestinians so high it seems pointless to them.

*Iran Sanctions and Security in Israel*

*Q.* Mr. President, you answered this question in a more general way but I wondered, after listening to Prime Minister Peres, if you are willing as the President of the United States to issue a challenge to all of the countries here to isolate Iran, not to do business with them, since it appears that they are in fact the major sponsors of Hamas? And I also wanted to ask you in regard to some of the other points you made here, if you were a family member of one of the victims in Israel—we've watched all of these anguished faces—do you think that you would feel, with so many of today's accomplishments yet to be achieved, that you would want this to go forward without a lot more security, the things that the Israeli people are demanding?

*President Clinton.* Well, first of all, let me remind you that last year I took far stronger steps against Iran than any of our European allies had taken up to that point. And many of them disagree with me honestly. They believe that it's better to maintain some dialog, to have some engagement. I have continued to argue for the isolation of rogue states. I did it in the United Nations last year, and I continue to do that, and I will continue to do that based on the evidence we have at hand.

In answer to your second question, I don't know how I would feel if I had lost a child. Anyone who says that you know exactly how you would act if you had lost a child, unless you've lost a child, you don't know that. I can tell you this, that I met with the two American Jewish families who lost their children recently, two of them, in New Jersey the other day, and their reactions, I think, are pretty reflective of the Israelis.

One family—a woman who lost her daughter, her other daughter is about to go back to Israel to continue her studies and feels strongly that the peace process should continue because unless it continues there will never be any long-term security for the people of Israel. The other family, the father of a slain daughter, has spent

a lot of time going around our own country speaking up for the importance of peace, but he is very concerned about security because he knows unless people are secure they won't feel free to make peace. And I don't think that means they're ambivalent or wishy-washy. I think it means that they understand that these are two sides of the same coin.

There must be a certain level of security in order for people to feel free to pursue peace. But unless we ultimately resolve these questions in a peace agreement, there will never be the kind of security that normal life brings and that people expect in the normal course of day-to-day events.

#### *Middle East Peace Process*

Q. Mr. Mubarak, in the light of the discussions of the day and in the light of the final statement, what are the steps adopted by this conference for us to guarantee that the peace process will go back to its normal course? Another question—that is, the guarantees presented by this conference so that the peace process might not run into difficulties again.

*President Mubarak.* Well, in reality when it comes—[inaudible]—you cannot guarantee 100 percent that it will not be met with obstacles. I think nobody on Earth can guarantee this. Nobody on Earth can guarantee that there will be no terrorist acts to stop the peace process or to impede it. We must make sure that this will not happen, and this is why we have to take steps for security.

Now, there are steps that were mentioned in the statement. We also decided to set up a committee to follow up this statement and to guarantee the peace process, and we talk about terrorism because terrorism seeks to impede this peace process. So it's two aspects. We wish to denounce terrorism, to struggle against it, and there are also means and ways, procedures specified in the statement to struggle against terrorism.

#### *Extremist Movement*

Q. President Clinton, I'd like to ask this question of you. Have you not adopted a series of mechanical means to combat what is essentially an ideological movement, namely Islamic extremism, a movement which in fact has caused great tragedy not only in Israel but also in Egypt and even in the United States and other coun-

tries? Should you not deal with the problem directly instead of through euphemisms?

*President Mubarak.* I'll surely tell you that you are mentioning only Islamic—Muslims, like any other religion—Islam, like any other religion, is against violence, against any act of violence under any title.

*President Clinton.* I want to support President Mubarak. He has taken action within Egypt to deal with the problems here. I am gratified that in our most serious terrorist incidents we have made arrests quickly, and in the cases where the legal process has run its course, we have achieved convictions with strong sentences.

That does not mean—and in each of these countries, the facts may be somewhat different. So I don't think we're speaking in euphemisms when we talk about the terror here being tied up with the question of getting peace in the Middle East. But Islamic—to equate Islam with terror I think is a big mistake. I mean, the Japanese dealt with it in the Tokyo subway with the sarin gas. We dealt with it at Oklahoma City. People all over the world are coming to grips with it. The British are having their buildings blown up again.

So I think you have to look at this in every country, in every place it rears its head, and see how it can be dealt with. The problem here is that the terror is associated with people who do not want a peaceful resolution in the Middle East. If we had a peaceful resolution in the Middle East and if the Palestinian Authority had time to develop as an ordinary government, they would have more and more and more capacity to deal with the terrorism on their own. And that's what we're talking about.

One last question. Shall we take one last question?

#### *Middle East Peace Process*

Q. A question for President Mubarak. Madrid Conference II is an idea which was presented by Russia and by Syria, and again today it was presented by Saudi Arabia. What's your point of view about it, and will it be proposed to save the peace process?

*President Mubarak.* Look, Madrid Conference, Cairo Conference, Moscow Conference, Washington Conference—it is—are issues which should be tackled and discussed and come out with a resolution to help the process to continue. When the Saudis said about Madrid—just to check if the peace process continues or

to help. We have discussed a very important issue which is handling the peace process, security, and terrorist action. This is very important because it is laying the peace process. So I don't think Madrid or Washington or Moscow or Egypt or France doesn't deal—the name of the town will solve the problem.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 115th news conference began at 3:50 p.m. in the courtyard at the Movenpick Hotel. Participants referred to Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel and Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom.

## Remarks on Arrival in Tel Aviv, Israel *March 13, 1996*

Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, members of the Israeli Government, representatives of the people of Israel. I am honored to be here today, again, to stand with you in a time of pain and mourning and challenge. We grieve with you in the loss of innocent lives; we pray with you for the scores who lie wounded; we stand with you in the unceasing battle against those who commit these awful crimes. Your journey is our journey, and America will be with you every step of the way.

The attacks we mourn claimed Israeli lives, although others, including Americans, died as well. But these attacks were aimed at all who yearn for a better day for this region, for all who believe that peace is better than war. The enemies of peace have grown desperate and more vicious as the reality of peace has moved closer. But we must not let the acts of the wicked few destroy the dreams of the many. Together we must restore the security that building peace requires. Those who practice terror must not succeed. We must root them out, and we will not let them kill the peace.

In this time you are not alone. I have flown here with the Prime Minister, as he said, from Sharm al-Sheikh, from a Summit of Peacemakers that is unprecedented in the history of the Middle East. At the urging of many who were once Israel's sworn enemies—Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians—29 leaders came together, 13 of them from Arab countries. There were Israel neighbors, there were other Arab nations, nations from Europe, North America, and Asia. All have long labored for peace. All are now united against the terror aimed at Israel. They came to support with deeds as well as words the peace process and the restoration of security and new efforts against terrorism.

Only a few years ago, such a meeting would have been inconceivable. Only a few weeks ago, such a meeting would have been hard to imagine. Just a few days ago, this remarkable meeting was put together.

The leaders of this area have met only a handful of times, and then always to celebrate events on the road to peace. But today they met in common cause to take action to confront the urgent threat of terrorism, to show that Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic Jihad will not succeed in killing the peace.

Now many of Israel's neighbors in the region have demonstrated that they share your desire for peace, and they understand that extremist violence is also their enemy. The nations that met in Sharm al-Sheikh sowed the seeds for a new cooperation to build peace and to confront those who would destroy it. The Middle East is changing; we must not, we will not let terror reverse history.

Sharm al-Sheikh was a beginning. Tomorrow we will press forward when I and senior administration officials meet with the Prime Minister and his key security advisers. We will discuss concrete steps the United States can take to help the IDF and the Israeli police defeat those who would murder and maim. No one takes greater personal risks on behalf of peace than the brave men and women of Israel's security forces, like those who are standing here. America is determined to support them in every way and to provide them with the means they need to prevail against extremism and violence.

I have visited this beautiful and holy land before. I have celebrated a great event on the road to peace. I have mourned Prime Minister Rabin. Today I come again in sorrow but also in determination with this message from the